

Music as a Profession for Girls.



There is a certain stone to be seen in a Museum (probably the British, since everything seems to congregate there) - which those learned in antiquities say was once put outside a Roman Theatre, and the inscription on that stone was a Latin way of saying "House full", or something else that showed how very popular that place was. Well the Musical Profession has become a very popular one nowadays, and to be truthful this paper must say, with stony persistence, "Profession crammed full, Scarcely standing room". For it is quite a mistake to suppose that because some Operatic "Stars" secure enormous salaries, every good musician can find lucrative work. Not a bit of it. Professional life is a really hard struggle, which has been made infinitely worse by the crowds of unsuitable or badly-trained people who rush in, prove unfit, and end either by taking starvation fees or posts as lady helps and Nursery governesses. Cases have even occurred where sheer necessity has driven persons of this stamp to serving in shops. Therefore much careful thought ought to be given to the subject before a girl adopts music as a profession, but if after all the pros and cons have been considered she still seems to possess such real talent as to justify the choice, then the thing that is absolutely essential is that she should have a good training.

The ideal training is for a child to begin lessons young, under some trustworthy teacher, either privately, at school, or in the Junior department of some such place as the Royal College of Music, and when the time for more serious work comes she should go for several years as a full-course student to one of the big English musical institutions, this to be followed by Foreign travel, to become acquainted with other ideas and methods. Such a scheme would naturally be modified to suit individual cases, and the most essential part is the middle period which covers the best years for training.

The tuition in England is now fully equal to what can be obtained abroad (in some cases it is better) and while it is always open to train privately the advantages from joining one of the great music schools are so real that a girl will do well to avail herself of them.

These are The Royal Academy of Musich and Royal College of Music in London, and following on them the Guildhall School of Music and Trinity College, while in the provinces there are the Royal Manchester College of Music, the Birmingham Midland Institute, etc.

In several Institutions the choice and duration of studies are left to the student, (fees varying from £1-1-0 to £4-4-0 per subject per term) but at the R.C.M., R.A.M., and R.M.C.M., no pupil is admitted for less than one year, while the full course is at least three years, and the complete course of studies is obligatory on each pupil. This consists, roughly speaking, of two lessons in a first study, and one in a Second study each week, also weekly classes for theory, harmony counterpoint, Choral singing, Orchestra, Ensemble, etc, and additional classes can be taken for Elocution, Languages, Dramatic deportment, etc, by payment of something. These latter subjects are most important for singers.

R.A.M. Total entrance fees are £5-5-0. Fee per term £11-11-0

R.C.M. B " " " £2-2-0. " " " £12-12-0

R.M.C.M. No entrance fee. " " " £10- 0-0

There are also scholarships, Exhibitions, etc.

This training is the most thorough to be obtained, and in after life it is often a valuable asset to have either the R.A.M or R.C.M as an Alma Mater.

When a well-trained girl leaves the student stage, and actually enters on her profession, what openings is she likely to find? There is no simple path to success for anyone, but a singer of real ability can generally find work either in

opera, concerts, "At Homes", teaching, or musical comedy. A pleasing appearance and personality are, however, essential for the stage or platform, and good health is a sine qua non as long rehearsals and late hours are very trying.

A pianist will probably have to gain her main income by teaching or accompanying, as solo concert work is uncertain, and a girl can either try for private teaching, or else take a post in a school. Many of these are resident ones, and the mistress is expected to teach piano, class singing, theory, and perhaps the violin. The salaries vary from £50 to over £150 a year in good schools and competition is keen.

String players will also find their safest openings in teaching, either in schools or, privately, while to this they can add concert, ensemble and orchestral work. There is usually more scope in these latter directions for viola players and 'cellists than violinists, and with orchestral work it must be remembered that all the best engagements are filled by men, with the exception of the harpist in some orchestras.

As composers and organists there are few openings for girls. In the first case because composition pays very poorly, and in the latter because all important posts in churches are held by men.

Finally there remain the less usual instruments such as flute, oboe, etc. Several women have taken them up, and play well, but at present the opportunities for work are very restricted. Altogether it cannot be too strongly urged that the Musical profession is very full, and girls should be very very sure of their fitness before they embark on it. But when once it is undertaken they should carry through their training with the utmost thoroughness and devoted patience, for it is precisely those artists who have the widest grasp of their art who succeed in specializing the best.

Marion Scott